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Professor Mark Wegge

Module 5: Joint Planning Process

19 January 2026

DBF 5.1

Response

QUESTION: *Does the planner need to do all the steps when completing the Joint Planning Process? If yes, why? If no, why not and how do you compensate for missing steps?*

Primary Post (by January 19, 2026)

Yes, planners should execute all Joint Planning Process (JPP) steps, then scale depth and products, because step discipline protects the operational objective (OPO) from friction, enemy adaptation, and unacknowledged risk. The Joint Planning Process Workbook describes the process as "an orderly, analytical set of logical steps to frame a problem" (U.S. Naval War College, 2022, p. 24). Doctrine treats sequencing as the safeguard, granting flexibility in effort and tempo rather than permission for intellectual shortcuts. The critical distinction is between omitting steps, which doctrine prohibits, and compressing depth within steps, which doctrine permits.

Joint doctrine defines joint planning as "the deliberate process of determining how to implement strategic guidance: how (the ways) to use military capabilities (the means) in time and space to achieve objectives (the ends) within an acceptable level of risk" (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff [CJCS], 2020, p. I-1). Skipping a step severs part of that logic chain, leaving assumptions untested. Doctrine acknowledges that JPP tasks "may be performed concurrently, truncated, or modified as necessary, depending upon the situation" (CJCS, 2020, p. III-11), but this flexibility applies to execution, not intellectual labor.

When time forces compression, planners must compensate deliberately. Navy planning states: "Even in a time-constrained environment, omitting steps of the NPP is not the solution" (Department of the Navy, 2013, p. M-1). Compensation includes narrowing course of action (COA) breadth, tightening commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs), issuing early warning orders (WARNORDs) for parallel planning, and building branches and sequels that anticipate enemy counterplay.

In summary, planners should complete every JPP step, then compress depth, because disciplined sequence preserves ends-ways-means-risk coherence while deliberate compensation manages time and uncertainty.

References

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2020). Joint planning (JP 5-0).

Department of the Navy. (2013). Navy planning (NWP 5-01).

U.S. Naval War College. (2022). Joint Planning Process Workbook (NWC 4111K).

Secondary Post #1 (*by January 21, 2026*)

QUESTION (Suzy): (minimum of 150 words)

Suzy, strong post. You clearly walked through the Joint Planning Process (JPP) functions, and you highlighted the dependency chain across steps, which is where many staffs lose the plot. I agree with your bottom line on compression, but I would tighten the wording on “skipping.” NWC 4111K frames the functions as generally sequential, with supporting work running in parallel, and it also distinguishes design as a non-linear methodology used to frame complex problems while the JPP drives detailed planning (U.S. Naval War College, 2022, pp. 2-3). In other words, flexibility lives in depth, tempo, and concurrency. Joint doctrine supports this by allowing tasks to be performed concurrently and truncated or modified based on time and conditions (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2020, p. III-11). Navy planning reinforces the caution by warning that omission is not the solution, even under time pressure (Department of the Navy, 2013, p. M-1). Your mitigations fit well like fewer Courses of Action (COA). I would add one compensating move, sharpen Commander’s Critical Information Requirements (CCIRs) early so wargaming stress-tests enemy reactions against the OPO, not against staff convenience.

References

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2020). Joint planning (JP 5-0).

Department of the Navy. (2013). Navy planning (NWP 5-01).

U.S. Naval War College. (2022). The Joint Planning Process Workbook (NWC 4111K).

Secondary Post # 2 (*by January 21, 2026*)

QUESTION (Patrick): (minimum of 150 words)

Patrick, strong work. You captured the central truth that planning is iterative and that time and staff capacity drive how much depth each step receives. Your emphasis on preserving the linkage among ends, ways, means, and risk is the right doctrinal center of gravity for this question. I would tighten the claim by anchoring it in Joint Planning doctrine, which states JPP tasks "may be performed concurrently, truncated, or modified" based on the situation and time constraints (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2020, p. III-11). That language supports adaptation while still reinforcing step discipline. The practical implication is clear. Compress products, not logic. Navy Planning warns, "Even in a time-constrained environment, omitting steps of the NPP is not the solution." (Department of the Navy, 2013, p. M-1). Your recommendations align with that guidance, standing Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (JIPOE), prebuilt Operation Plans (OPLANs), focused Course of Action (COA) development, and commander decision tempo. I would also tie those tools explicitly to an operational objective (OPO), since the workbook frames JPP as an "orderly, analytical" method to frame the problem (U.S. Naval War College, 2022, p. 30).

References

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2020). Joint planning (JP 5-0).

Department of the Navy. (2013). Navy planning (NWP 5-01).

U.S. Naval War College. (2022). The Joint Planning Process Workbook (NWC 4111K).

Professor Feedback

Jeff,

Meets expectations. Good job!

See my post in this thread for some MOD 5 gouge.